

## can hardly stand the wait by dizzy

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Christmas 1989 and Christmas 2016

Prompt: reddie please!☐

## **can hardly stand the wait**

### **Christmas, 1989**

It's a good time of year. School's out for the winter holidays and the town is full of trees strung with lights and his mom has her Santa figurine collection out on show.

Even better - Eddie's here. He's on his stomach on Richie's bed, feet kicking up. Underneath his breath he hums along with Alvin and the Chipmunks.

In a few minutes they'll have to go out and shovel the driveway again. But it'll be nice because good ole' Mags will make them some hot cocoa or cider and she'll give Eddie extra marshmallows because she knows his mom doesn't let him have them. Eddie will be happy with his cheeks all red and his eyes all warm and Richie won't be able to stop looking.

He never can, lately. Maybe it's the nightmares - Eddie with blood dripping from his mouth, clowns snarling all teeth and terror - or maybe it's just what being nearly fourteen does to a boy. His body is awake and alive with all sorts of new things, and maybe it shouldn't be Eddie at the center of them, but it is. It always has been.

"You're totally Simon," Eddie says.

"What?"

"You're Simon." Eddie looks up. His foot kicks a little faster. "You know, chipmunks?"

The song is wrapping up, but Eddie gets it. "I'm totally Alvin."

"Are you shitting me? You're shitting me. You're Simon and there is literally no way to argue that. He's tall, he's skinny, he's got those dumbfuck glasses just like yours - shut up, you're Simon."

"Fine then." Eddie grins. "You're Theodore."

"I am - fuck you. I am not Theodore. Fuck you, seriously. I'm Alvin."

Richie snorts. "You wish you were Alvin."

"Who, then? Who, please tell me. Who is Alvin?"

"Bill," Richie says. "Obviously."

Eddie scowls. "Bill wasn't an option."

"Fine then," Richie says. "Then there isn't an Alvin. We're just two lost sidekicks taking on the world."

Eddie rolls his eyes but he goes back to reading his (Richie's) comic book and Richie goes back to leaning against the pillow smiling and daydreaming about something yet to come.

## **Christmas, 2016**

"Do you remember that commercial from when we were kids?" Richie asks. He's watching Eddie sitting on the floor surrounded by strings of lights.

"Which one?" Eddie asks, and then, "Probably not. I didn't watch nearly as much tv as you."

"Fuck off, you watched so much tv with me. And your mom practically lived in front of the set."

"Exactly," Eddie says. "She lived in front of the tv, and past the age of ten I just wanted to be wherever she wasn't."

There's more to it than that, and Richie knows it, but they tend to only hash those old demons out when they're naked in bed together at two in the morning. Pillow talk proves a fantastic supplement to actual therapy.

"It's so weird how all that shit is basically vintage now. Like back then they told us shit like Cinnamon Toast Crunch was 'part of a complete breakfast' and that My Buddy was actually a real doll you should buy that definitely wouldn't murder you in your sleep."

"No one ever really believed that," Eddie says. "Parents just deluded themselves."

"About the doll?"

"About the cereal."

"I'm gonna tell Mags you said that. She fed it to me every day."

"Mags had you as a son to deal with," Eddie says. "She was in survival mode. It's understandable. I wouldn't have blamed her if she'd just tossed a box in your room once a day and fled before the stench of teenage boy could take her down."

"Fuck you, I was a goddamn angel and I smelled like roses." Richie kicks up his feet. "I'm definitely not helping you now."

"You're the one that wanted the tree, dipshit." Eddie throws tinsel at him. It lands short, and Eddie just looks grumpier. It's a cute look on him. "Which commercial?"

"Oh, the Hershey's one that went like-" Richie mimes the tone of bells. "That one."

"You know they still play that one, right?" Eddie asks. "I swear they do."

"You're fucking with me," Richie says. "No way."

"Yes way." Eddie finishes meticulously checking every single bulb on the strand, then plugs them in.

It lights up and casts the room multicolor. There's a moment of silence where they both just take it in.

Richie can't remember the last time he had a Christmas tree. Eddie said Myra always paid someone to come in and decorate, then to come back in and take the decorations down once Christmas was over. Eddie said he can't even remember what they looked like.

These lights blink tackily against dollar store tinsel. They could afford something better, if they wanted, but it was an impulse buy. It was

all an impulse buy, all the things littering their floor that Richie gave up on trying to put together half an hour ago. Watching Eddie has been far more satisfying.

"It's so ugly," Richie says, raw admiration in his voice.

Eddie snorts. "Look, asshole."

"Not a complaint." Richie pushes his laptop off his lap. "Come on, sit down. Let's enjoy the fucking season."

Eddie does sit down, sparing no space between them. He slumps comfortably into Richie's side and Richie lifts an arm to put it around Eddie's shoulder.

They're two middle aged men who should probably both be dead, but they aren't. They don't know what the fuck they're doing in life anymore, but they do know that they've decided to do it together.

It's already the best Christmas Richie's ever had.